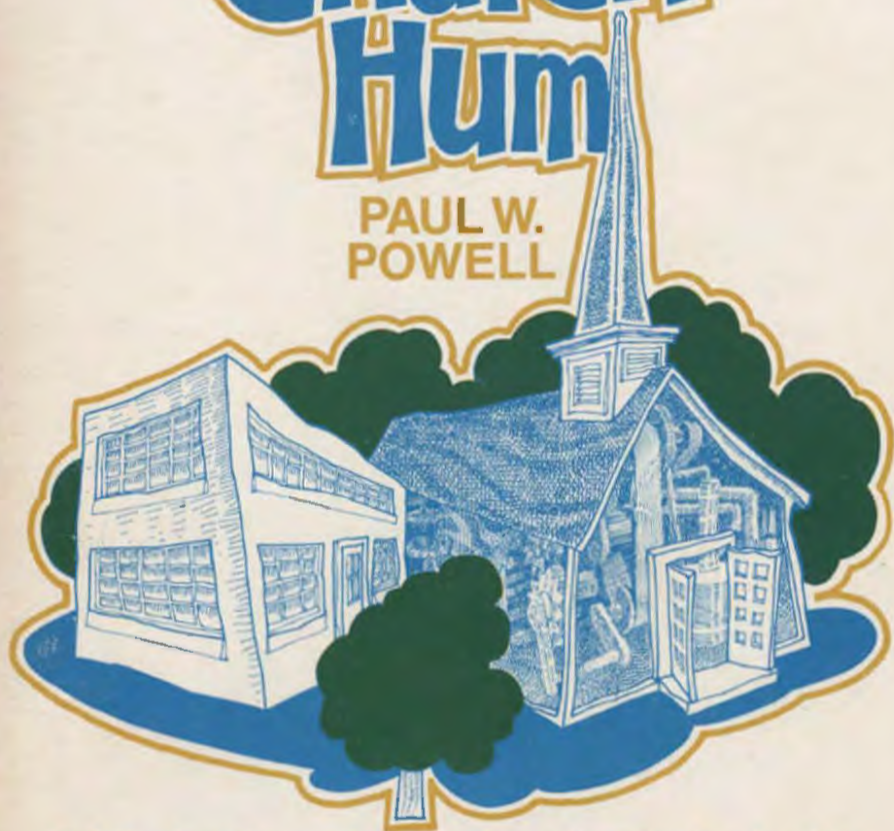


How to Make Your Church Hum

PAUL W.
POWELL



Spiritual and practical keys to effective leadership

How to Make Your Church Hum

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CHURCH HUM

God bless you
Paul W. Powell

BROADMAN PRESS

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1

Major on the Basics

***"The secret is not in the play
but in the performance."***

Knute Rockne was one of the greatest football coaches who ever lived. In his thirteen years as head coach at Notre Dame, his teams won 105 games, lost 12, and tied 5. He never had a secret practice. In fact, he sometimes would put up a sign for visitors that said, "Secret practice, come and bring your notebooks." On one occasion when an Army scout missed a train connection and didn't get to the Notre Dame game he was to cover, Rockne obligingly sent him the plays he planned to use against the West Pointers. He explained his action by saying, "It isn't the play that wins, it's the execution."

All great coaches agree. Champions are made by majoring on the fundamentals—blocking and tackling. They execute well. A team may win a game here and there by a trick play or a gimmick. But they won't be a consistent winner that way.

Great churches are built the same way—by majoring on the basics. The spiritual fundamentals for the church are prayer, visitation, and Bible teaching.

Some pastors seek to build their churches on activism or spectacular events or gimmicks. These may succeed for a

while, but they seldom have lasting results. They usually result in little more than a spiritual spasm. The trouble with activism is that it soon exhausts both you and the people. The trouble with gimmicks is the people soon get wise to them and lose faith in your leadership. The trouble with spectaculars is that you must continually outdo yourself, and you soon exhaust your ideas. The only solution then is to move to a new place.

However, if you build a church on the basics—visitation, prayer, and Bible study—and you do the basics well, there is no limit to how long you can stay and how strong the church can become. My conclusion is this: The secret is not in the play, but in the performance. You don't build an exciting, spiritual, growing church on some newfangled idea that no one ever thought of before. You build it on the basics. You build it by doing them better than anybody else.

A few years ago I became concerned about the growth of my church. So I took several days and visited the pastors of eight of the leading churches in Texas to find out the secret to their success. None of them had a surefire plan for church growth. I found no trick plays. I returned home with this conclusion. They were really not doing anything unusual. But what they were doing they were doing unusually well.

They had all discovered that the secret to a great church is not in the play or program but in the performance. They all did the fundamentals better than average.

My twenty-two years in the ministry has confirmed this. I have served as the pastor of five different churches. These have varied in size from 92 members to over 2,400 mem-

bers. The first of these was a part-time church in the open country. The second was in a small rural town of a few hundred people. The third was a redbrick church in the largest city in the county. The fourth was in a county seat adjacent to a bustling university of 12,000 students. The last is one of the fastest growing churches in Texas, located in the buckle of the Bible Belt.

In all of these churches I have tried to learn everything I could from every available source about how to improve my churches. I have innovated. I have experimented. I have ventured. Sometimes I have marched forward boldly. Sometimes I have tiptoed forward in fear and trembling. I have tried outdoor revivals, all-church picnics, riverside services, baptizings in the lake, apartment-house blitzes, door-to-door visitation, telephone canvasses, famous guests, and everything else I could think of. In all of this I have seen some glorious victories and many colossal failures. In fact, I probably have more good ideas that won't work than any other preacher alive.

I soon learned that the most lasting and satisfying results came by majoring on the basics. The more I did this, the more I saw God work. It was as if he was confirming the importance of these fundamentals to me.

I have seen a real outpouring of the Holy Spirit on several occasions. The first of these came in the fifth year of my third pastorate. For some unexplainable reason there came over our services the profound convicting power of the Holy Spirit. It was nothing new or unusual that we did. It was the same congregation with the same pastor preaching and the same choir singing. But suddenly something was different. There was new conviction in the hearts of the

people. There were often tears in the congregation. There were new commitments made, and people were drawn to the church for unexplainable reasons. It became evident to all who were there that God was present in his church in a special way. It was a glorious experience!

The second great experience came in the fourth year of my fourth pastorate. I had been meeting with a group of my men for a Friday prayer lunch for two years. We had been praying expressly for revival. It began one Sunday morning when I was away in Houston, Texas, closing out a revival meeting. I wasn't even there to take credit for it. And to top it off, my guest preacher of the day didn't even have a union card. He was just a layman (unordained). He was an executive in The Gideon's International. As usual he told about their Bibles and then gave his testimony.

At the close of the service, instead of giving the traditional invitation, our guest simply asked those who would receive Christ or commit themselves to him to stand right where they were. There was no music, no coming forward, no decision cards. Over sixty people stood. I returned home that afternoon to preach in the evening worship service. The moment I stepped into the sanctuary I knew something was different. There was new enthusiasm in the singing. There was new joy on the faces of the people. When I stood to preach, there was new conviction in the message. And when I gave the invitation, seven people came forward to make public commitments of their life to Christ.

The next day the lay speaker called me from Memphis, Tennessee. He almost apologetically told me that he had never experienced anything like that before in his life, and

he couldn't explain it. He said he had given that same testimony hundreds of times and nothing much had ever happened. He had never given an invitation like that before and didn't know why he did that day. His explanation, and mine, was that it was the sovereign working of God.

In the few weeks that followed, I saw the mightiest outpouring of the Holy Spirit I have ever seen in a church. Literally hundreds came to know Christ as their Lord and Savior.

These experiences have taught me one thing. If you want to build on rock and not on foam, major on the basics. God is still at work in the world. And he doesn't need anything new to do his work. The secret to making the church hum is not in some newfangled play but in performing the fundamentals well.

2

Pray Much

"Without me you can do nothing."

Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). With that he gave us the secret to building an exciting and growing church. He did not say without me you can do the necessary. He didn't even say without me you can do the minimum. He said, "Without me ye can do nothing." It is the living Christ who provides the power that makes the church hum.

Someone has said that if we rely upon education, we get what education can do. If we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do. If we rely upon promotion, we get what promotion can do. If we rely upon money, we get what money can do. If we rely upon people, we get what people can do. But if we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do. That's what our churches desperately need today. We need what God can do.

Through the Holy Spirit, the Lord provides all the power necessary to accomplish his work. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost to empower his church for effective witnessing and ministry. He has been with us ever since. He is with us now and stands ready to empower us if we lay hold to him through prayer.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to establish the church, to equip the church, and to empower the church (1 Cor. 12:3-6). The churches that are effective and evangelistic are those who realize their dependence upon him.

The Holy Spirit establishes the church. He established it on the day of Pentecost. And he has kept it alive and growing ever since. Without him the church could not exist. Jesus told us that he would build his church upon redeemed and transformed personality (Matt. 16:18). But there can be no redeemed personality without the work of the Holy Spirit. Without him there would be no conviction of sin (John 16:8-11). Without him there would be no conversion (John 3:5). And without him there would be no confession of Christ. As Paul says, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3). This then is how the church comes into being and how it is kept alive.

The Holy Spirit equips the church. He supplies the church with its leaders and the gifts necessary for service. He staffs the church. Paul expresses this truth generally when he says, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord" (1 Cor. 12:4-5). Then he expresses this explicitly when he says, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). He set Paul and Barnabas apart as missionaries (Acts 13:2). He set the Ephesian elders as overseers of the church (Acts 20:28). As surely as God called men like Moses and Jeremiah and the apostle Paul, so he calls out those who are to serve him

today. Without the Holy Spirit, the church would have no gifts for service and no leaders to oversee his work.

The Holy Spirit empowers the church. He gives effect to all that we do. Paul confirms this by saying, "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Cor. 12:6). The word *worketh* means "energizes" or "empowers." The same Holy Spirit that establishes the church and equips the church also energizes and empowers all we do to make it effective. The church is more than an organization. The church is a Spirit-filled and Spirit-empowered fellowship. Organization alone is never enough. A cemetery is the most highly organized place in the world. Nobody ever gets out of place there. But a cemetery is also the deadest place in the world. And it's the last place you would want to go.

When a church is nothing more than an organization, it is also dead and no one wants to go there. J. B. Lawrence in his book *The Holy Spirit and Missions* said: "Too often the trouble with churches of today has been that when they realize their spiritual weakness and feel their power waning, they create new boards, new committees, new programs, and in the end all they have acquired is more machinery with less, or no, power to run it."

To be alive the church must be energized by the Holy Spirit. As the Old Testament prophet wrote about getting God's work done, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

Do you want to see your church come alive and begin to hum? If so, don't look to some new promotional scheme, or some new spectacular program, or some new gimmick. Seek the power of the Holy Spirit through prayer. Pray

alone. Pray as a church on Wednesday night. Pray in small groups, and pray without ceasing. If the Holy Spirit can't do it, it doesn't need to be done. So if you want to see the church hum, remember this—without him you can do nothing.

3

Build Spirit

"Let's get all excited."

I'm often asked the secret of our growth at Green Acres. My answer is always the same. It is God's Spirit and the spirit of our people. There is no doubt about it. Our people have a spirit of joy and enthusiasm and friendliness and optimism that is contagious. Visitors coming to our service for the first time often notice it even before the service begins.

This sweet, sweet spirit found at Green Acres is a must for any church that wants to hum. William James, the famous psychologist, said, "Religion is either a dull habit, or an acute fever." There's no in-between. So if you want to see your church hum, get all excited. Things will begin to happen.

What kind of spirit do we need in our churches?

1. *The spirit of joy.*—The surest mark of a Christian is not faith, or even love, but joy. The Scriptures say, "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Phil. 4:4). *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* says, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." We are told that the early church "did eat their meat with gladness" (Acts 2:46). Paul described the giving as hilarious (2 Cor. 9:7). What must the rest have

been like! So old-fashioned joy ought to characterize God's church.

2. *The spirit of enthusiasm.*—Emerson said, "Nothing worthwhile is accomplished without enthusiasm." That's true in the church as well as out of it. The word *enthusiasm* means "God in us." It suggests the idea of excitement and concern and dedication. By far the most effective way to reach people for Christ is an enthusiastic recommendation or invitation from a church member to a friend, neighbor, or new acquaintance.

3. *The spirit of optimism.*—How can pessimism, despair, and defeat ever characterize the followers of him who said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)? We believe that God loves all men. We believe that history is in God's hands. We believe that all things work together for good to them that love God and who are the called according to his purpose. How, then, can we be anything but optimistic?

4. *The spirit of love.*—Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Division, envy, and strife are like sand in a ball bearing. The church can never hum when they are present. Last fall I was in an evangelistic conference with Fred Swank, who pastored the Sagamore Hills Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, for forty-two years. He said never once in all those years was there a fight on the church floor. He felt that in part this was the explanation for the fact that through the years God had called out more than 125 people into full-time Christian service. Love is an indispensable element in a humming church.

5. *The spirit of friendliness.*—The Scriptures teach that he who would have friends must show himself to be friendly. The church that is not outwardly and openly friendly and receptive to visitors and new members will soon find itself without any. Jesus, who was ever and always a friend to all men including sinners, is the example for his church.

6. *The spirit of loyalty.*—While our primary loyalty and allegiance belong to Jesus Christ, we must never forget that the church is both his bride and his body. We cannot, therefore, love him fully and completely without having a sense of loyalty and devotion to his church.

How do you build a spirit like this? If such a spirit is so vital to the church's being an exciting, dynamic, growing place, then what must you do to create that kind of spirit in your church?

You must have it yourself. The people in your congregation catch your spirit in the same way they catch your cold. They catch it by exposure. So you, then, are the key to building a good spirit in your church. If you are negative, pessimistic, and unfriendly, they will eventually catch that spirit and become the same way. However, if you are warm and friendly and enthusiastic and excited, the church will soon capture that spirit also. You are like a thermostat to the church. A thermostat, though small in size, has an influence all out of proportion to its size. It actually controls the temperature of a whole house.

Just so, you largely determine the spiritual temperature of the church. It soon reflects your warmth or coldness. While some people in the church may have great resistance to your spirit, no one will be completely immune to it. If

they have close enough contact with you, they will eventually catch it. So, the best way to build a good spirit in the church is to have a good spirit in yourself, and let them catch it from you.

Brag on your people. Remind them of the good things they are doing. Magnify their virtue. Express confidence in and appreciation and love for them. As you magnify their good qualities, it challenges them to do better and better. Praise develops more positive spirit than does criticism. Encourage and compliment the people at every opportunity. Do it by public announcement. Do it in private contacts. Do it by telephone calls. Do it in sermons. Do it by letters. Let them know that you appreciate them, and it will encourage them to do better.

Set worthy goals and reach them. Confidence and optimism come from a repetition of success. So, set a worthy goal that you can reach and then pull out all the stops to reach it. Make specific plans and assignments so that everyone knows exactly what they need to do in order to reach the goal. Nothing becomes dynamic until it becomes specific. People will not work hard until they know exactly what they are to do. The one way to develop a winning attitude is to win. Since everyone wants to be a part of a winner, the spirit begins to grow with each victory. So, once you set a goal, do everything necessary to reach it and soon that optimistic, victorious, exciting attitude will be developing.

Make the worship services spirited. There is no other more effective time and place to build a church spirit than then. Make it a time of enthusiastic singing, warmhearted preaching, and enjoyable fellowship. Keep the announce-

ments short and snappy. Pause in the middle of the services and have the people stand, turn around and shake hands with one another. This creates friendliness and goodwill. We oftentimes sing "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in This Place." The very singing of this song begins to permeate the hearts and the lives of our people and assist in building the good spirit that we have.

So build a good spirit among your people. It helps make the church hum.

4

Wake Up the Worship

"The Christian's happy hour."

Years ago the psalmist said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Why shouldn't he say that? Eleven o'clock on Sunday morning should be the Christian's happy hour. If you want the church to hum, you had best make worship a joyous, enthusiastic, relaxed, and informal experience.

The tragedy of many churches is that worship has become a dull, cold, dry, formal, monotonous experience. Their services begin at 11 o'clock sharp and end at 12 o'clock dull. They duplicate the days of Malachi. He tells us that worshipers in his day were saying concerning their worship experiences, "Behold, what a weariness is it!" (Mal. 1:13). The level of dedication had dropped so low that the people were unwilling to give their highest and their best to God. Yet they were not willing to abandon worship altogether. So, they settled down to a dull, monotonous, halfhearted worship experience. When Malachi singled out those who were most responsible for this condition, he pointed the accusing finger at the leaders who were in charge of the worship experience.

Those who want to make the church a cold, stiff, formal,

ritualistic experience indicate that they do not have the slightest understanding of the nature of the church. The church is by nature the household of faith. It is the family of God. Whatever else you say about a family, they are relaxed and informal with one another. If the family is what it ought to be, being together should be a relaxed, informal, and enjoyable experience. Since the church is the family of God, the worship service ought to be the Christian's weekly happy hour.

What can we do to wake up the worship? There are several things that can help immensely.

Emphasize fellowship. Encourage the people to visit with each other before the service. Some people think you ought to enter the sanctuary and sit quietly until the worship begins. I have never seen the logic in getting people together to be quiet. If they want to be quiet, let them sit at home alone. When we come together at church, we ought to visit with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We ought to get to know our family better. I see no conflict between visiting and fellowship prior to the service, and a genuine worship experience.

Sing with gusto. Music is one of the key factors in building a meaningful and enjoyable worship experience. Music is not just an aid to worship—it is an act of worship. Paul declared this when he said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). This is but one of the many passages in the Bible that speaks about the importance of music in worship. This passage teaches us how to sing in church.

(1) *We are to sing with purpose.* Singing is a means of admonishing, inspiring, and encouraging one another. One of the great needs of people today is to be encouraged and lifted up. They are defeated and downcast by the pressures of life. Through singing we lift and strengthen those around us.

(2) *We are to sing with heart.* When we sing with grace in our hearts, we are singing with gratitude and thanksgiving. Toscanini, the great conductor, said quite often to his orchestra as he rehearsed them, "Men, don't play with your instruments, play with your hearts." The people in our church ought likewise to be admonished often to sing with their hearts, not just with their lips.

(3) *We are to sing with devotion.* Singing is to be unto the Lord. We do not sing primarily for the ear of man, but for the ear of God. We do not sing primarily to display our vocal ability or our musical skills. We sing rather to glorify the Lord. This means that a person does not have to have exceptional musical ability in order to sing effectively. Music is vital if we are going to wake up the worship.

Preach interestingly. You ought to talk so that people can understand you. The preacher who consistently shoots over people's heads does not prove that he has superior ammunition. He rather proves that he doesn't know how to shoot. If you do not preach so people can understand you, then to what purpose do you preach at all? Preaching must be clear, relevant, and timely to keep people awake.

Keep the announcements short and snappy. Punctuate them with humor if you can. This doesn't mean that they have to take on a circus or a side-show atmosphere. Nonetheless, they can express a relaxed and informal atmo-

sphere that allows for good humor.

Shake hands with the visitors. After we have welcomed the visitors, we have the congregation stand and while the choir sings a chorus, our people turn around and greet their neighbors and welcome them to the house of God. While this may seem to be irreverent to some, it in no way hinders the Spirit from working in the church. Quite to the contrary, it creates an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness that makes it more conducive for the Spirit to work.

Relax the order of worship. Allow for a freedom and a looseness in the service that will permit you to interject things you feel appropriate at the moment. If the singing of a chorus or a certain hymn seems appropriate, the service should be relaxed enough for the pastor to ask the music director to lead it on the spur of a moment.

Introduce the new members. This should be an unhurried and enjoyable time for the church. This is a good time for the pastor to tell about the person's occupation, their alma mater, their home town, their family, their former church life, and so on. This not only shares information that someone else might identify with, but it creates a warm and friendly atmosphere for all the people.

In these and scores of other ways you can wake up the worship. You can make this the Christian's happy hour.

5

Preach the Word

"They're fed up with not being fed in church."

There are some things that never change. One of them is the preacher's task. It is to preach the Word. If the church is to be exciting, alive, and evangelistic, he must be ever and always at this basic task.

The apostle Paul expressed this when he said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). There are two words in this verse that are important to understanding its meaning. The first is the word *preach*. When we use the English word *preach*, it immediately calls to mind the image of a man standing behind a pulpit on Sunday morning delivering a sermon to a congregation.

The Greek word that Paul used brought to Timothy's mind a much different image. He pictured a representative of the Emperor coming to proclaim a message to the people. He delivered a formal, grave, and authoritative message that the people must listen to. It was more than just a teaching time. He had come with all of the authority of the king behind him as he spoke. He was, in fact, a messenger of the king. That's what the preacher is. He is a messenger of the King. He is to preach with authority and

boldness and the clarity of one who has been sent by the King himself.

The second word that we need to understand is the word *word*. It means the whole body of revealed truth. It is the preacher's responsibility to proclaim to people everything that God has delivered unto us.

Through the years I have talked with effective men of God and asked them for their counsel on preaching. They have, without exception, told me the same thing. They have said, "Preach the Word."

Several years ago I visited W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas. I wanted to learn what I could from him so that I might be a more effective minister. I asked him if he had his life to live over what he would do differently in his ministry?

Dr. Criswell said in an instant, "I would preach the Bible. I would start with the first verse of the first chapter of the book of Genesis and preach a sermon from it. If I could not find a sermon in the first verse, I would take the first two verses. If I could not find a sermon in the first two verses, I would take the whole chapter. If I could not find a sermon in the whole chapter, I would take the first two chapters. If I could not find a sermon in the first two chapters, I would take the whole book of Genesis. I would go from Genesis to Revelation, and I would preach the whole Word of God." I need not remind you of the blessings of God that have been upon the ministry of this man who has faithfully preached the Word.

About the same time, I was in several evangelistic conferences with Dr. C. L. Culpepper. He was for forty years one of our missionaries in China. He was a participant in

the great Shantung Revival. That was one of the mightiest outpourings of the Holy Spirit known in the history of the world. Whole student bodies were turned to Christ. There were miraculous healings. The spirit of God moved upon a nation in a way unparalleled since the book of Acts.

I asked Dr. Culpepper if he were a pastor in the States today and wanted to see that kind of revival come about, what he would do. He said to me, "Young man, I would preach the Bible. People are hungry for the Word of God."

It is my conviction that people are fed up with not being fed in church. They want to hear the Word of God preached. If the reports I receive from pulpit committees are correct, there are not many preachers doing it. I remind you that your responsibility is to preach the Word. It is not your responsibility to preach philosophy, or science, or psychology. It is your responsibility to preach the Word of God. If you will do this, God will bless it to the salvation of the lost and the enrichment of your church.

When you limit yourself to the Word of God, you are not in any way hampering your effectiveness. The Word of God is eternal truth (1 Pet. 1:25). The Word of God can cut deep into the human heart (Heb. 4:12-13). The Word of God is the agent of the Holy Spirit in converting the lost (1 Pet. 1:23).

Henry W. Schweinsberg, one of our Southern Baptist missionaries in Spain, shared with me recently the testimony of his own conversion. He was walking down the street in his native land of Australia when a man handed him a copy of the New Testament and told him to take it home and read it. Dr. Schweinsberg said, "I do not to this day know who he was."

But he took the Bible home and began to read it. He came eventually to the third chapter of the Gospel of John and the story of Nicodemus. As he read about the new birth, he stopped and got down on his knees and prayed, "Dear Lord, I do not know what this means, but whatever it is, I need and want it in my life." That day he was born again and became a Christian. As a result of his conversion, he was disowned by his parents and has not seen them to this day. He eventually went to Colombia and pioneered our Southern Baptist work there. He has since gone to Spain to carry on our work there. He is today nearing retirement, a veteran in the army of God, converted by reading the Word of God.

If you want to see the church come alive, to become enthusiastic and evangelistic, then get back to the basic task of the ministry and preach the Word. Do not let anything interfere with that. Like those early disciples, you may have to shuffle responsibility to other people so that you can concentrate on the basic task. But do not let anything deter you from the ministry of the Word and of prayer (Acts 6:4).

How should you preach the Word of God?

Preach it urgently. We are to be instant in season and out of season. The word *instant* means "to be ready," "to be prepared." The word *season* means "at any opportunity." The two suggest that we are always to be ready, to be prepared at any moment, at any opportunity to preach the Word of God. We are to do it with the sense of urgency. Preaching is a matter of life and death. It has pleased God that through the foolishness of preaching people should be saved. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is

the means of redemption, and we can never be casual about it.

Richard Baxter, a great preacher of an earlier century, expressed this truth in poetic form when he said, "I preach as never sure to preach again,/As a dying man to dying men." We are to preach the Word urgently.

Preach uncompromisingly. The preacher faces a two-fold task. He is to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable. Paul used three words to express this. They are *reprove*, *rebuke*, and *exhort*. Those three words say that we are to proclaim God's message without compromise.

It is not always popular to proclaim the Word of God. Preaching oftentimes cuts across the grain of society. However, we must not water down the message because it rubs people the wrong way. It is to be a message and not a massage. We must remember that people are asleep spiritually, and you cannot awaken them without disturbing them. There is no such thing as effective preaching without disturbing people, and they don't like to be disturbed.

Several years ago I had a conflict with a man in my church. I went to discuss it with him and as we talked he said, "Paul, you are the kind of preacher I think we need, but you are not the kind that I like." I asked him, "What kind of preacher do you like?" He said, "I want to go to church, listen to the sermon, get up and go home and not be bothered." There are many who hang a sign on their hearts and minds when they come to church, "Please do not disturb." More than once the preacher has been up to the top of his baptismal boots in holy hot water because he proclaimed the truth of God. He dared to reprove and to

rebuke people for their sins.

There is, however, another side to effective preaching. You are also to exhort. This means that people are to be encouraged and inspired and strengthened by your preaching. It is not your purpose just to drive men to despair. It is not your responsibility to take away all hope from them. It is rather your responsibility to point them to God, who is the source of strength and encouragement. The world beats your people down all week; they don't need you to constantly add to it. They need to be lifted.

Preach unweariedly. We are to preach with all longsuffering. The word *longsuffering* describes that spirit which never grows weary. That spirit which never quits. That spirit that never gives up. Preaching is sometimes terribly discouraging. There are times when all of us are tempted to throw in the towel and to give up the fight. But we are admonished by God to preach without quitting, without surrendering, without giving up. Paul encourages us by saying, "Let us not be weary in well doing: in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). There will be seasons in your ministry when you sow and you see no fruit come forth. Don't give up. Don't change your message. Don't resort to gimmicks. Just keep on preaching the Word. Believe that if you sow the seed in preaching and you water it in tears that in due time God will give the increase.

There is in California a strip of desert one hundred and fifty miles long and from ten to thirty-five miles wide called Death Valley. It is called that because nothing grows there. Several years ago an unusual phenomenon occurred. It rained for nineteen straight days in Death Valley. To the amazement of all who saw it, there began to grow in Death

Valley lilies and buttercups, and Indian paintbrushes and poppies. Obviously the seeds of these flowers had been dropped there by wagon trains and automobiles and birds over scores of years. They were just waiting for the right conditions and then they could bring forth their fruit.

It is that way with the Word of God. If we remain faithful in sowing, when the conditions are right it will bring forth fruit.

If you want to see the church come alive, become excited, begin to grow, preach the Word. If that won't do it, it's not worth doing.

6

Give Dynamic Leadership

"Lead, follow, or get out of the way."

God's work is accomplished not by human effort but by human instrumentality. He is always looking for a Moses, a Joshua, a David, or a Paul who will lead his people.

Leadership is the ability to inspire, ignite, and unify people to action. A leader is a person with the capacity and skill to rally people to a common cause. Leadership is always in short supply. One management expert summed this up when he said that the problems of organization seldom come from the excessive desire of individuals to assume responsibility. Just the contrary. The difficulty springs from their reluctance to take responsibility.

Groups do not lead. Individuals do. A dream, an idea, a vision begins with one person, and he then inspires, motivates, and leads the group to accomplish it.

If the church is to hum today, it must have dynamic leadership. We must lead, follow, or get out of the way.

What does it take to be a good leader? It's hard to say. The qualities of good leadership are so numerous that it's almost impossible to list them all. They can be readily seen, however, in flesh and blood. Nehemiah was one of the classic leaders of all times. If you'll read the book in the

Bible that bears his name, you will see a great leader, an instrument of God in action.

Nehemiah held the high and honored position of cup-bearer for Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. As such, he enjoyed a life of luxury and ease and security.

But Nehemiah was a Jew, and he could not forget it. His people and his homeland lay in devastation, and it haunted him. His heart grew heavy at every news report from Jerusalem. After much prayer he courageously requested a leave of absence from the king to return and rebuild the broken-down walls of the city of Jerusalem. Permission granted, he made the long and difficult journey to tackle a nearly impossible task. With vision, courage, determination, hard work, optimism, and an unwavering faith in God, the great task was finally completed. Nehemiah had been more than a mere human leader. He had been God's instrument to accomplish God's purposes.

Nehemiah's leadership was not inherited, nor was it voted on. It was something he earned. He earned it by the sheer force of a wise, courageous, loving personality. All effective Christian leadership comes that way.

In the life of Nehemiah we see the qualities of leadership most needful today. Let's look at them!

1. Vision.—Vision is the ability to see beyond today. It is the capacity to anticipate the future. The best leadership is built on anticipation rather than reaction. It is seeing the unseen. Not many have this gift. Many people have sight; few have insight.

Nehemiah did. The masses saw only a rubbish heap that was once the walls of a mighty city. They saw only hopelessness and defeat. But not Nehemiah. He looked

beyond what was to see what might be. His leadership started with a vision and a dream born of God (Neh. 2:12).

If you want to be a leader, you need vision also. To be a leader you must be ahead of others in your planning, thinking, and dreaming. It's hard for people to follow a person who is behind them.

Leaders are people of imagination, insight, dreams, and vision.

2. *Courage*.—Courage is the boldness to implement your vision despite almost sure opposition, criticism, and a chance of failure. Nothing worthwhile is ever accomplished without criticism and opposition. Nothing! But good leaders are not deterred by it. In fact, good leaders must often lay a foundation out of the bricks critics throw at them.

I keep in my office a wood carving of a barracuda that I bought in Belize several years ago. I have glued on the side of it a quotation by Griffith Thomas. It says, "Don't wade in barracuda waters if you don't want to get chewed on." It is there as a constant reminder of the price of leadership.

Also, every venture involves the possibility of failure. The newer the venture, the greater that possibility. Good leaders are willing to take chances, to experiment, to try the new, and even to risk failure. That's the last thing most of us want to do. Fear of failure causes most men to stick with the old and familiar ways of doing things. They are safer and more comfortable. They involve little or no risk of failure. Thus, they settle for mediocrity. But the best leaders have a flair for originality and a capacity to innovate. Leadership is not for cowards. To be a leader you must be strong enough to make hard decisions and daring enough to risk failure. This kind of courage attracts followers and

becomes a source of strength to them.

Nehemiah had this courage. His was born out of a deep confidence in God and it has inspired others (Neh. 4:14). It always does.

3. *Confidence*.—Confidence is believing in yourself and your goals. It is a balance between humility and vanity. Such confidence will inspire the confidence of others and they will want to follow you. If you do not believe in yourself, no one else will. No one wants to follow a person who does not know where he's going.

So, if you want to be a leader you must have a positive mental outlook and an infectious optimism.

The best leaders have had such confidence and assurance that their people would do almost anything for them. J. Frank Norris, a fundamentalist preacher of the last generation, had this. A follower of his once said, "If he wanted to charge hell with a water pistol, I would follow." That's leadership!

Confidence can be acquired in several ways. It can come through training, through skill, and through experience. But it comes most often when, as Nehemiah, we are confident that we are doing God's will and are under his direction and protection (Neh. 2:20).

4. *Humility*.—A great leader's confidence must be balanced with humility. He must not be so self-assured that he feels no need of God. He must not be so confident that he ignores the counsel of others.

No man knows all there is to know about anything. The best leaders recognize this and welcome all the wisdom and counsel they can get.

Solomon said, "In the multitude of counselors there is

safety" (Prov. 11:14). Humility makes a person a better leader.

Henry Kaiser, the great American industrialist, said, "I make progress by having people around me who are smarter than I am—and listening to them. And I assume that everyone is smarter about something than I am."

Woodrow Wilson said, "I need all the brains I have and all I can borrow."

John D. Rockefeller explained his success by saying, "I simply hired men smarter than I."

If you want to be a good leader, learn from others. Draw around you a group of people such as your deacons or a staff who can help you do what needs to be done. In seeking a staff, I look for the best men available. I want people who are experts. If they don't know more about their field than I do, then I don't need them. When I get them, I listen to them.

5. Determination.—This is tenacity or persistency that refuses to quit or become discouraged because of hardships, difficulties, or opposition.

Tenacity has been defined as the courage to hang on five minutes longer. It is the refusal to quit yourself and the ability to inspire others to stickability also.

Many a victory has been won just because of persistency, and it can take many forms. Termites are not as dramatic as tornadoes, but they can eventually be as devastating. A tack hammer is not as noisy as a jack hammer, but it can eventually batter you down.

Henry Kaiser was a hard-driving man who never gave up. One of his associates said of him, "Henry is like a happy elephant. He smiles and leans on you. After a while you

know there's nothing left to do but move in the direction he's pushing."

Lincoln took a different approach. Thaddeus Stevens was at one time very critical of Lincoln's approach to slavery. He thought Lincoln should be more vocal and explosive. Later he recognized his wise leadership and acknowledged that Lincoln was not a "battering ram" against the citadel of slavery. "With his unusual shrewdness and caution, he is picking out the mortar from the joints until eventually the whole tower will fall."

Choose the tactic you will. Lean on them or keep picking away. Just remember, it's the determined people, like Kaiser, Lincoln, and Nehemiah, who become leaders (Neh. 4:8-9).

6. *Energy*.—Leaders are hard workers. There's no way around it. General Mark Clark once said, "A leader must be willing to do everything he asks of his followers—and more. He must be able to work harder, concentrate longer, face the extra danger, carry the extra load, and go the extra mile."

The price tag of leadership is long days and sleepless nights. If you don't want to pay that price, you'd best not stop at the leadership counter. No man can be a success or a great leader on an eight-hour day. So, if you want to be comfortable, take an easy job without responsibility. But if you aspire to be a leader, you need to hit the job with all you've got.

When you have an urge for diversion—social visits, TV, cards, movies, golf—you must evaluate it by saying, "Will this expenditure of time and energy help me realize my present purpose in life?"

Leadership is a selfish taskmaster. Read the biographies of most great men and you'll discover that they were at their jobs from first morning light until after midnight.

John Wesley, founder of Methodism, was a good example. He was a frail little man, only 5'4" tall. But every morning he rose at four, delivered his first sermon at five, was on the road by six. Every day he traveled sixty or seventy miles on horseback, preaching to anyone who would hear him. At night, he sat up writing books or composing hymns by candlelight. In all his eighty-seven years, he never once spared himself. And men loved him and followed him for it.

Nobody will follow a lazy man. Leadership belongs to the Wesleys and Nehemiahs who believe so much in what they are doing that they roll up their sleeves and work day and night to accomplish the task (Neh. 4:6).

7. *Organizational ability*.—A wise leader realizes early in life that he can really do little in and of himself. No matter how much energy he has, he can't do all that needs to be done. But by properly working with and influencing others, he can do the miraculous. The leader's success is determined largely by what he is able to get others to do. He then must be adept at organizing and utilizing other people.

If you are going to be an effective leader, get to know your people, their motives, ambitions, aspirations, their weaknesses, and their strong points. You need to see them in terms of their potential. You need to ask what they can do or have done uncommonly well. Then feed the strength and starve the weakness.

Great people usually have great weaknesses. Grant was a

great general and a winner. When Lincoln appointed him, people said, "He has great weakness—the bottle. He's a real boozier." Lincoln replied, "If I knew his brand I would send a barrel or two to some other generals." The Scriptures are replete with the strong guys with incredible weaknesses—Samson, Jacob, David, Peter—but God built on their strengths. As a leader, you must also.

Once you have discovered and helped people develop their abilities, you must then be able to organize, motivate to action, and delegate responsibilities. This is called "executive ability."

Once an assignment is made, you'll have to check up to make sure it is carried out. If it isn't, more encouragement must be given. This requires tact. Tact is the ability to build a fire under others without making their blood boil.

Your effectiveness as a leader will be in direct proportion to your ability to utilize the abilities of others to a maximum.

Nehemiah was a master at organizing and utilizing others. With incredible skill he organized, assigned, and supervised his people to accomplish God's work (Neh. 4:13-23).

8. *Concern.*—A good leader cares for his people as much as for his goals. No man can be a great leader unless he loves his people and sincerely has their best interests at heart. He must exist for the benefit of his followers—not just for the benefit of himself. If he loves them, they will love and follow him.

Washington endured the misery of Valley Forge with his men, sharing every hardship with them. That's one reason they followed him so loyally.

You must take genuine joy in the success of those under you. You should encourage them by letter, personal word, and phone calls. Each word of encouragement and each compliment strengthens and fortifies your leadership.

You must be willing always to take more than your share of the blame for failures and a little less than your share of the credit for success.

The best leadership occurs when, after the project is over, the people say, "We did it."

The surest way to lose your leadership is to cease to lead. So, don't settle down in the comfortable rut and rest on your laurels. Comfort comes as a guest and lingers as a host, and eventually stays as a master to enslave us.

We must always strive to go onward and upward for God. We can never let up.

If you want your church to hum, be a Nehemiah and give dynamic leadership.

7

Plan Ahead

***"When you get where you're going,
where will you be?"***

When you get where you're going, where will you be? That may be the most important question you will ever face. The only answer many people could give is heaven. They are so heavenly-minded they have no earthly idea why they are here.

Heaven is real, and we are going there eventually. But the earth is also real, and we are already here. More than that, we are here for a purpose. We are here to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. We are here to witness where we are, to send where we cannot go, and to stay everlastingly at it until Jesus comes again. We are to start at the end of our toes and encircle the globe until we run up our own heels.

We are more likely to accomplish our God-given task if we plan ahead. The importance of advanced planning cannot be overestimated. Unless we have a plan, we cannot move with either purpose or determination. Even Jesus had a plan for his disciples. He said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the

earth" (Acts 1:8). He did not leave them to go about his work haphazardly. He gave them a definite plan to work by.

We need to work by a plan also. Plans give us an organized approach to our work and enable us to more nearly get it done. Plans reduce pressure. We will either be controlled by pressure or a plan. Plans create enthusiasm, motivation, and energy.

Said historian Arnold Toynbee: "Apathy can only be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal that takes the imagination by storm; second, a definite, intelligible plan for carrying that ideal into practice."

Plans give a sense of satisfaction when completed. To work without plans is to work haphazardly and poorly.

We have always tried at Green Acres to look several years ahead and prepare for things before they become emergencies. We are about to complete a \$1,250,000 Family Life Center. It has been three years in planning and completing. Periodically, we have deacons' planning retreats to discuss and plan for every phase of our church. We make plans for future buildings, more adequate parking, additional staff, better programs, development of our eighteen-acre camp, and the purchase of additional property.

We don't want the future to just happen. We want to help shape it. By planning we can. Many of these plans will not be completed for five years, but we are moving towards them already. This kind of planning gets more done and is greatly appreciated by our people.

If you want your church to hum, try some advanced

planning. Decide where you want to go and move with determination. The alternative is to drift.

On a recent trip, while looking at my airline ticket, I noticed it contained the four essential ingredients of good planning: destination, route, timetable, and cost. All good planning needs to include these things.

1. Destination.—The first and most important thing in good planning is to determine your destination. Where do you want to go? What is your goal? If you have no destination, how will you know when you arrive? If you have no goal, you may spend all your time running up and down the field without ever crossing the goal line. A fanatic has been defined as a person who, having lost sight of his goal, redoubles his effort. A goal saves us from such fanaticism.

A goal is a simple, clear, penetrating statement of where you want to go. The most critical fault of most organizations, churches included, is a loss of mission or goal.

The road to success is paved with goals. What are yours? Where do you want to be in five years? Do you need more space? Additional staff? New programs? Additional property? Decide what you need to do, and make that your goal. Our goal is clear. We are determined to build the most evangelistic church in East Texas. Yours may be different, but it should be just as clear, simple, and definite.

In setting your goal, think big. If God's your partner, make no little plans. They have no power to inspire men's souls. Little plans attract only little people. Make them realistic but big enough to excite, shock, and create talk. A good goal must be measurable, achievable, and challenging. James Russell Lowell said, "Not failure, but low aim is a crime." We must be bold, daring, and imaginative.

There are always distractions. Goals help us know not only what to do but also what to leave undone. Nehemiah was doing a great work in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. But he had distractions. Hecklers tried to draw him away into a summit meeting. He replied, "I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Neh. 6:3). Without a goal we would be tempted to quit and go down and talk, and the work would stop.

The greatest sermon is yet to be preached, the greatest song is yet to be written. And the greatest work for God is yet to be done. Set a goal, and start toward it.

2. *Route*.—On my trip I had to make two plane changes, a long layover, and several stops. The ticket contained all that. Without it I might have been stranded in some distant airport or missed my flight altogether.

Plans need a step-by-step description of how you expect to reach your goal. The route is the tactic. It explains what steps you will take to get where you are going.

Tactics should be specific. Nothing becomes dynamic until it becomes specific. Let's say your goal is to have one thousand in Sunday School next Sunday. To simply announce the goal will not accomplish it. No one knows what he is supposed to do. Specific assignments need to be made to each class and department. When every person knows exactly what his part is in reaching the goal, he is more likely to do it.

3. *Timetable*.—My ticket told me when I would leave and when I would arrive. Good planning needs to include facts of this kind. When do you want to begin that new

building? When do you want to enlarge your staff? When do you want to complete that new parking lot? Unless you set a timetable, you are apt to keep shuffling the project aside and never get it done. Decide what needs to be done, how to do it, and when you are going to begin.

4. *Cost.*—Every trip costs something in money and time. You need to know what it is before you begin the journey.

Cost is an important matter. Jesus told us to always count the cost before we venture (Luke 14:28–32).

However, the primary question is not how much does it cost, but how important is it that we get there and how badly do we want to go. If we aren't careful, we may become so concerned about losing money that we lose opportunities.

Paul told us to "buy up" our opportunities (Eph. 5:16). We sometimes have to do that literally.

Does God have a great mission for you and your church? If so, plan to fulfill it. Determine your goal, plan your route, set a timetable, count the cost, and get going.

Paul once said, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23). This advice is never more needed than today. Be enthusiastic. Be optimistic. Work hard and think hard. Plan well, and things will begin to happen.

8

Work Hard

***"Off your seat, on your feet,
and into the street."***

If you're looking for a quick, easy way to make the church hum, forget it. There is none. It takes blood, sweat, and tears to build an exciting, alive, and evangelistic church.

There is no contradiction between the "pray much" of chapter 2 and the "work hard" of this chapter. As you have heard all your life, "You are to pray as if everything depended on God, and work as if everything depended on you."

Hard work is one of the major keys to success in any area of life. One of the most ingenious men who ever lived was Thomas Edison. He invented the phonograph, the incandescent bulb, a microphone, the mimeograph, the medical fluoroscope, the nickle-iron-alkaline storage battery, and the movies. He made the inventions of others (the telephone, telegraph, and typewriter) commercially practical. In addition, he invented hundreds of other useful items.

When people claimed Edison was a wizard, he would say, "Pshaw! It's plain hard work that does it." And then he would often give his much-quoted statement, "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration."

A fashionable society lady was talking with Lord Northcliff on one occasion. She said, "It's perfectly wonderful how everyone is raving about that man Thackeray. Just think, he hadn't been heard of a fortnight ago. Why, he awoke one morning and found himself famous." "Madam," growled Lord Northcliff, "on the morning that Thackeray woke up and found himself famous, he had been writing eight hours a day for fifteen years. The man who wakes up and finds himself famous, my dear lady, hasn't been asleep."

Louis Nizer, the famous trial lawyer, once said, "When I hear congratulations tendered to a man on his luck in achieving a success or when I am greeted in similar fashion after a courtroom victory, I am inclined to recall that this type of luck usually visits me at 2:00 A.M. on a cold morning when red-eyed and bone-weary, I am pouring over law books preparing a case. It never visits me when I am at the movies, when I am on a golf course, or when I am reclining in an easy chair."

Hard work is important in building a great church also. The fact that a man is laboring in the religious field does not lower the price tag of success. Those who have done the most for God are usually those who have been willing to work the hardest. The apostle Paul is a case in point. He explained his own ministry in comparison to the other apostles by saying, "I labored more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor. 15:10).

John Wesley, who set two continents on fire for God, was a tireless worker. He mastered six languages and was thoroughly versed in theology, history, and literature. Physically he was unimpressive. But with seemingly boundless

energy he preached 40,000 sermons, traveled 250,000 miles, mostly on horseback, and wrote 440 books and pamphlets. His audiences, which he held spellbound without public address system, sometimes numbered 20,000. He worked hard.

It is because hard work is so vital to any successful endeavor that the unofficial motto of our church is "Off your seat, on your feet, and into the street." It is a motto that we have adopted as a staff and a philosophy we try to instill in our people. If you want to make the church hum, then you've got to work hard.

Without a doubt, as many demands are made on a minister's time as any other person alive. Finding time to do everything that needs to be done is one of the biggest problems I face. Recently one of my staff members was to make a speech at her alma mater. In preparation she polled our staff to find out the biggest problems we faced. I told her in a flash that mine was finding enough time to do everything that needs to be done. One of the most pressing questions of all of us is, how can I get more done? I want to offer you some suggestions that will partially answer that question.

Plan ahead. Your life will be determined either by a plan or by pressure. You make the best use of your time if you have a plan. If you do not have a plan, then time has a tendency to evaporate. While you can't be held responsible for your capacity, you are responsible for the strategic use of your time. Therefore, you ought to plan ahead. You should plan the program of your church in a general way at least a year in advance. You ought to mark major events, commitments, and programs, including time off. Then you

ought to plan the next three months in detail. If you plan ahead, you will simply be able to save more time.

You ought also to plan ahead in your preaching. There are several advantages to a planned preaching program. It saves time by reducing the hours you lose hunting for a sermon topic or text from week to week. It allows you to gain more from the reading that you do. You will discover materials which otherwise would have slipped by unnoticed if you already have your mind oriented in a certain direction.

Planning helps you to avoid repetition. If you depend upon the spur of the moment for sermon selection, you will soon find yourself returning to old and familiar themes and not preaching the whole gospel. It will also help to take some of the drudgery out of sermon preparation, since you will already have a theme well under way. I heard it long ago but it is still true. To accomplish more, plan your work and work your plan.

Develop a schedule. You need to develop a routine in carrying out your work. You will soon discover that things done at the same time each day or each week are done much more easily and enjoyable. I have found in my own experience that the following schedule is best. I am in my study, which is located in my home, from 8:00 until 11:00 in the morning. At 11:00 I go to the church, read my mail, and return phone calls. From 12:00 until 1:30 I have lunch with one of our men or with a prospect or a staff member. From 1:30 until 3:00 I visit the hospitals. From 3:00 until 5:00 I am available for counseling. From 5:00 until 7:00 I do prospect visitation. I, of course, cannot keep this schedule perfectly, but having it and trying to work by it enables me to

get a great deal more done.

Deciding to move my study to my home and thus being unavailable to the people in the morning, except for emergencies, was the hardest decision I ever came to. In fact, I delayed it for twenty years in my ministry. I felt that I must always be available to the people. But I discovered by developing this study schedule and informing the people of it, I was accomplishing a great deal more and enjoying it more at the same time. The people are being better fed, and consequently, they are more appreciative and understanding of my need for privacy in study time. It would never have been possible if I had not developed a study schedule and determined to do most of my studying away from the church.

Establish priorities. You should plan your daily schedule the first thing in the morning and set priorities for the day. Make a list and tick off the important items first. Do what you can, and do not fret over what you cannot do. Establishing priorities and sticking with them requires tremendous self-discipline.

I began the chapter with the question "How can I get more done?" Perhaps that's not the best way to phrase it. You are already doing something all the time. You are already filling up every moment of your day and night. You are eating, sleeping, resting, waiting, working, doing something all the time. The real question is "How can I get more of what I want to do done?" In other words, "How can I better manage my time?" The answer is to establish priorities.

One of the secrets of the apostle Paul's life was that he majored on the important things. He said, "This one thing I

do." Our problem is that we have to say "These ten things I dabble at." Establish your priorities, discipline yourself to stay with them, and see them to completion.

Delegate responsibilities. D. L. Moody said, "I'd rather put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men." One of the secrets of getting more done is to do only what no one else can do for you. If somebody else can do the job, let them. Learn to give your work away. Give it to your secretary. Give it to your staff. Give it to lay people. If somebody else can do it, let them, and you concentrate on the things that you alone can do. I have discovered that consistently no one else can preach for me. So I give myself to studying and preaching. I have also discovered that no one else can visit for me. So, I give myself to the pastoral ministry of visitation.

I don't run the mimeograph machines. I don't mop the floors. I don't instruct baptismal candidates. I don't meet with a lot of committees. I let somebody else do all of those things. I don't know where one air conditioner switch is in our church. Furthermore, I don't want to know. As long as I don't know, nobody is calling on me to operate the air conditioning.

We recently completed a major building. I met with the building committee only once. I attended their first meeting, stayed five minutes, and challenged them "Think big" and left. They discussed what they wanted to do, surveyed the church, visited similar buildings in other cities, interviewed architects, drew the plans, presented them to the church, oversaw the construction of the building, and I never met with them again. Learn to give work away. Give people a job and then trust them to do it.

This is biblical. With divine insight, the apostles resisted the temptation to neglect their basic task of preaching and praying in order to deliver groceries (Acts 6:2). They solved the problem by having the church elect seven capable, spiritual men who could take over the business of alms distribution. They stuck with the task God had given them to do, and they delegated other responsibilities to men who were capable of carrying them out. After the election of these first seven deacons, Luke comments: "The word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly" (v. 7).

Organize yourself. Keep your books, your files, and your work materials well organized and in place. If it takes you several minutes to locate an article or a piece of information or a book, you are wasting time. Put things back where they belong. Keep things in their place. It's as easy to do it at the moment as it is later, and it can save you much time. An orderly arrangement of things will save you time in finding it and in putting it away. There is not much need in having good books or a good filing system if you cannot find what you need when you want it.

Learn to say no. You cannot be all things to all men at all times. There are times when you simply have to refuse. Channing Pollock said, "I had to make a choice as to whether I would be a famous author or an infamous diner-outer; I couldn't be both." Oftentimes in life we have to make a choice between the good and the best. There is nothing wrong with dining out. It is a pleasurable activity. It is desirable. Much good can come from it. But, it can also take you away from things that are more important and more pressing. In order to do what you feel needs to be

done, you will have to learn to say no.

Use your odd moments. Someone has said, "Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves." None of us would think of throwing away the nickles and the quarters and the dimes that accumulate in our pockets. But almost all of us do throw away the small change of time—five minutes here, a quarter of an hour there—that accumulates in any ordinary day.

Learn to be a wait-watcher. Put a notebook and a pen in your pocket so you can make notes at odd moments. Carry a book with you so you can read while you are waiting for an appointment. A university analysis shows that the average individual spends three years of his time just waiting. And a Gallup poll which sampled one hundred persons at random reports that every one of them expected to do some waiting during the next few hours, but only one out of eight had any plans for doing something constructive with the time.

Some of the world's greatest works have been done by those who used their waiting time well. Someone asked E. Stanley Jones, a noted Methodist evangelist, missionary, and writer, how he managed to turn out so many books. He answered, "I strictly budget all of my time. If I have only half an hour in my hotel room before a meeting, I write a few lines or a paragraph and in the course of time it adds up to something worthwhile." William Lyon Phelps carried on a voluminous correspondence in the chinks of time between appointments. Robert Louis Stevenson seldom left home without two books in his pocket—one to read and one in which to jot down notes.

When my wife and I are traveling together, I often let her drive, and I use these moments to scan a magazine

article or to make some important notes on things I need to remember. If you use the minutes well, you will discover that you are saving hours in the long run.

Examine old habits for possible streamlining. It may be that you can use a form letter and save time. It may be that a phone call would be just as effective as a personal visit. It may be that the people needing help can come to you as easily as you could go to them.

Handle each piece of paper only once. When you receive a letter, try to deal with it immediately. After all, the information is already fresh on your mind. If you delay in dealing with it, you will have to reread it to refresh your mind. If you can answer it, or pass on the responsibility, you leave your desk uncluttered and save time in dealing with that piece of paper again later on.

Use good equipment. It is imperative in this modern day that you use the best tools available. Get a good dictating machine and use it often. If possible, buy some portable dictating equipment so that you can dictate letters while you drive to the hospital, while you are on a plane, or while you are waiting for an appointment.

Learn to handle interruptions well. Interruptions are a constant problem in getting work done. Some of them are important and deserve your time. Others are of little consequence and need to be dealt with quickly. If a visitor tends to overstay his time, you might slowly rise and gently say, "It's been nice seeing you today," or "Let's pray together about this problem and ask God to guide and direct you." In ways like this you are suggesting that the time for the conference is over so that you may get on with other pressing matters.

Learn to scan. The modern preacher dares not neglect his reading. Readers are leaders. If you are to minister effectively, then you must stay up on your reading. However, you do not need to read every word in the newspaper or every sentence in a magazine or even every chapter in a book. Learn to be selective. Mark passages as you read and save those that you think will be of future value.

Save your work. Long ago I learned to make good notes as I studied, to write my sermons out in full, and to save them for future use. Then, as I have found material that fits with those old sermons, I go back and put it in place. Through the years many of them have grown in their effectiveness, and I have preached them again and again. If a sermon is worth preaching once, it is worth preaching again. If you have put sweat and study into a message, you should conserve the fruit thereof.

Coordinate group activities, meetings, and visits. Plan to have most of your committee meetings either on Sunday night or Wednesday night when you will already be at the church. This will save other nights for visitation or being at home with the family. When you plan your visitation schedule, arrange the cards so that you visit all the people in a certain location at one time. This not only saves gas, but it saves the time you would spend crisscrossing town, going from one place to another.

Work by appointments. Teach the people that if they want to see you, it is best to call your secretary and make an appointment. That way they can be sure you are in and that sufficient time is allowed for their problem. It is best even to do your visiting by appointments. Call the people in advance. They not only will appreciate it but also your visit

will be much more effective, and you will have a better chance of finding the people at home.

Start early. If you begin early, you will find yourself working with greater joy and accomplishing your task with less anxiety. Furthermore, the quality of your work will go up as the frustration of it goes down. It is oftentimes good to set a time when you want to finish a project as well as the time to start it, and this enables you to work at a good steady pace.

Take time off. Several years ago a wise retired pastor said to me, "Paul, take vacations often." God didn't intend for man to work all the time. He intended that one day in seven be a day of rest. The fact that you are in God's service does not eliminate the need for your body to have rest any more than it eliminates the need for your body to have food.

When Leonardo da Vinci was doing the famous painting, *The Last Supper*, observers were critical of the long periods during which he would just sit in the cloister and meditate. When they criticized him about his failure to work as much as they thought he should, he replied, "When I pause the longest, I make the most telling strokes." So, take time out—in which you do something that restores the joy and the zest to your living. For, as John Ruskin put it, "There is no music in a 'rest,' but there's the making of music in it. People are always missing that part of the life—melody." So, take a day off, take a vacation. Leave town for a few days. But learn to rest.

Don't procrastinate. Whatever needs to be done, do it now. Don't put it off. Procrastination is a thief of time. It is a fatal habit to fall into. The longer we put a thing off, the

harder it becomes to do it. It is not what we do, it is what we don't get done that wearies us. Procrastination not only wastes minutes but also saps our emotional energy by adding dread and dislike to chores which should be routine. Delays make a job bigger than it really is, so when it needs to be done, do it.

Use your lunch hour. I once heard a successful salesman say that any man who dined alone is destined to be a failure. He was emphasizing how important the time you spend eating a meal can be. I have found taking my laymen or prospects to lunch is invaluable. It is a time to counsel, to encourage, to witness, to instruct, and to promote.

Remind yourself there is always enough time for the important things. You do not *find* time, you *make* time to do the things that are important. Do you want to make the church hum? If so, pull off your coat, loosen your tie, roll up your sleeves, and go to work! There is no quick, easy way to accomplish the task.

9

Involve the People

"Plans don't work, people do."

A few years ago I had the joy of leading one of the greatest coaches in Texas athletic history to Christ. The Sunday morning he made his profession of faith he said to me, "Preacher, don't put me on the bench. I want to get in the game." This was his way of saying that now that he was a Christian and a church member he didn't want to be a spectator. He wanted to be a participant.

Christianity is not a spectator sport. It demands involvement, and my friend understood this.

Most churches need to give more attention to involving their people—not just in attending meetings but in the work of ministering for Christ.

It has been my observation that programs don't work—people do. If we'd give half as much thought and effort to developing people as we do programs, the church would begin to hum.

Bud Wilkinson's description of football is classic. He said that football is twenty-two men on the field desperately in need of rest and forty thousand people in the stands desperately in need of exercise. A better description of the church could not be found. There are far too many Chris-

tians sitting as spectators in the game of life while Jesus says, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few." It seems clear in the New Testament that when a person was converted, he was immediately taught that the Holy Spirit had not only imparted the life of Jesus Christ in him, but also equipped him with a spiritual gift or gifts for which he was responsible to discover and use in God's service.

It is the primary responsibility of Christian leaders to help people discover and develop their service gifts, and then to direct them into active ministry. The more people are involved in using their spiritual gifts in service the happier, more faithful, and more mature they will become, and the better the church will hum.

There are scores of ways for people to get involved in ministry today.

1. *Deacon ministry.*—The first group to get involved in any church ought to be the deacon body. The word *deacon* itself means a servant. It's high time our men lived up to their name. The lowest concept of a deacon I know is a man sitting in a meeting once a month making decisions for the church. The highest concept is that of serving people. The first deacons were elected to deliver groceries (Acts 6:1-4). They were elected to get out among the people and meet needs. We need to return to this concept today. I am persuaded that only this kind of service and ministry will qualify a deacon to give other kinds of leadership in the church. If a man is not ministering in the name of Christ, how in this world can he be qualified and capable of giving leadership to the church?

2. *Adoptive ministry.*—In our church we have many divorcees. Quite often this means that there is a boy who is

growing up without the influence of a man. We have encouraged the men of our church to spiritually adopt one of these boys. They can take him fishing or hunting or to a ball game or some such activity and give him the benefit of a manly influence. Occasionally there is a man whose wife has died, and he has a daughter who needs this kind of spiritual adoption. We encourage our ladies to take her shopping, show her how to cook, or just spend time with her. This is a wonderful way to minister for Christ.

3. *Hospital ministry.*—We have seven families in our church who are committed to weekly hospital visitation. One family is assigned to visit the hospital each day of the week. They call the church office, secure the names of our people who are in the hospital and then visit them at their convenience. We have used the hospital chaplain and counselors to help train these people and thus make their ministry more effective and enjoyable.

4. *Shut-in ministry.*—We have secured a list of the shut-ins in our church and assigned them to people for regular visitation. Sometimes their responsibility is nothing more than calling them each day to see if they are well. Sometimes it involves helping them with chores around the house, doing minor repair work, taking them to the beauty parlor, or shopping, or assisting them in paying bills.

5. *Rest home ministry.*—Our people are involved in the rest homes in scores of ways. Some of them provide periodic worship services. Some of them visit from room to room to cheer the people up. In some instances, when the people have failing eyesight, our ladies read their mail to them and write letters for them.

6. *Thrift shop ministry.*—In my last pastorate we rented

a store near downtown and operated a thrift shop for the benefit of the poor. One group of our ladies collected, cleaned, sized, and racked good used clothing in the early part of each week. Then on Friday and Saturday another group of our ladies opened the store for business. We sold good, cheap clothing to help the poor. We sold it because we felt that if the people paid something for the clothing, it would help them maintain a measure of dignity, they would be more selective and less wasteful, and at the same time the proceeds paid the rent on the building. We have not begun that ministry here because there are other similar programs going on.

7. *Discipleship ministry.*—Last year I chose twelve of my most faithful men and gave them special discipleship training. I began by asking them to commit themselves to daily prayer and Bible reading and Scripture memorization. I then divided them into teams of two each and asked them to meet together at least once a week to discuss their spiritual lives, pray together, encourage one another, and go visiting. Once a month I had lunch with each of these teams to discuss their spiritual progress. Another time each month I had lunch with the whole group, and we shared testimonies. From that beginning several small discipleship groups have grown up spontaneously. Now groups of our men meet for breakfast, prayer, and Bible study on their own. We are growing mightily in Christian discipleship. They often invite me to join their meetings, but I steadfastly refuse. These groups have come about spontaneously. They are lay-led. They are going well, and I am glad.

8. *Mission ministry.*—We are involving our people more and more in mission work at home and abroad. In the last

two years I have taken mission trips to Brazil and the West Indies, and in both instances I have taken laymen with me. Their participation has not only been a great blessing to the missionaries and the work on those fields, but a tremendous enrichment to their own spiritual lives. Last summer we started a church in Mexico. With the help of Baptist leaders along the border, we secured a building and a pastor. We then sent a work crew down to repair the building, build outhouses, and pews. We followed that with two groups of young people and adults conducting Bible schools and revivals. This is going to be an annual activity that involves our people directly in foreign missions.

9. *Jail ministry.*—In other communities I have carried on a regular weekly ministry to the local jails. Every Sunday for five years while I pastored in Taylor, we maintained a jail ministry. The men of our church did most of the preaching and witnessing and grew tremendously through it. Towards the end of my ministry, one of my most faithful deacons said to me, "Pastor, before we started going to the jails, I did not even know how to share my faith. As a result of witnessing there, I now feel comfortable sharing Christ with anybody anywhere." Other groups are already maintaining an effective jail ministry here, so we have not moved into that area.

10. *Home Bible ministry.*—We have several Tuesday morning home Bible study groups in progress right now. These are informal study situations in which our ladies invite friends and neighbors and newcomers to their home for fellowship, prayer, and Bible study. Through these, lives are being enriched, and people are being saved.

11. *Fellowship ministry.*—Several years ago I selected

and organized a number of fellowship teams to help welcome new members into our church. The teams were assigned a specific Sunday each month to serve. As people came forward to join our church, it was their responsibility to come forward and assist these people in filling out decision cards. Then at the close of the service, they were to invite that new member, along with a few other people from the church, to their home for cake and coffee after the evening worship service. This was an effort to integrate these new people into the life of our fellowship as soon as possible. The program was a limited success. But out of it there has grown a spontaneous fellowship ministry that is much more effective. Many of our people are now taking it upon themselves to invite new people into their homes on a regular basis for fellowship and to help them get acquainted with older members of the church. It is proving to be a great blessing to those new people in town who have not yet developed a circle of friends.

There are scores of other ministries that need to be done and involvement will bring joy and growth to your people.

Service and ministry for our Lord need not be a complex nor complicated thing. It is just doing little things for other people. It is seeing and meeting human need where it is. As Jesus talked about feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, befriending the lonely, and loving the wayward, he described things we can all do. And he gave these kinds of ministries their crowning compliment when he said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).

Ministry makes the church hum. Let's help people get involved.

10

Major on Outreach

“Outreach is an attitude, not just an act.”

In the past four years Green Acres has been one of the fastest growing churches in Texas. A part of the reason for this is that we have made outreach a priority. I'm persuaded that outreach is an attitude and not just an act. It is a philosophy that permeates all that we do and not just a program that we promote. Outreach is like the vascular system in your body. It supplies life to all the vital organs and the appendages of the body. If the church is to be alive and growing, it needs to go all out for outreach.

No church needs to sit around and ponder what its mission in the world is to be. Jesus made that very clear when he said : “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28: 19-20).

The mission of the church is ever and always to evangelize, to baptize, and to catechize (teach). This means that our number one priority is to reach people for Christ.

What can you do to reach people for Christ? Here are some of the activities of our church that are used to reach

people for Christ:

1. *Newcomer visitation*.—Our minister of education visits every newcomer who comes to town to locate good prospects.

2. *Mail-out brochures*.—We send a series of four mail-outs to all newcomers. These are attractive, informative pieces of publicity sent each week for four weeks. We do this because very few people join a church the first Sunday they are in town. Usually they are busy unpacking, going back home, entertaining company, or visiting other churches for the first few weeks. If they receive a different mail-out from the church each week for a month, they are soon impressed with the interest of that church and remember its name.

3. *Pastoral visitation*.—Once a person visits our church they receive a visit from the pastor. The pastor, by virtue of his position and experience, is the best visitor the church has. In addition to that, he must visit if he is to set an example for the people to follow. Therefore, it is my practice to visit everyone who visits our church.

4. *Neighborhood visitation*.—We have organized our membership roll according to addresses. One of our retired men comes to the church office each Tuesday and notifies the church member living nearest to each visitor from the previous Sunday. We encourage them to visit that person, invite them over for coffee, take them out for dinner or take them a cake, and encourage them to become a part of our fellowship.

5. *Staff visitation*.—In the weeks that follow, these visitors are assigned to a staff member to visit. All of our staff members are expected to visit and to give a visitation

report in our weekly staff meeting. When possible, assignments are made according to the interests of the people. If they have young people in their family, we assign them to our minister of youth. If they are interested in the choir, we assign them to the minister of music. If they have small children, we assign them to our minister of childhood education.

6. *Visitation task force*.—We have a group of men who specialize in visitation. They visit each Wednesday night following our prayer services.

7. *Sunday School visitation*.—All visitors are also assigned to Sunday School teachers for follow-up. The Sunday School is the key to church growth so the workers are constantly encouraged to visit.

8. *Personal letters*.—At special times like revival meetings, special church events, Christmas, or when I am out of town, I send a personal handwritten note to prospects urging them to join us. They are often amazed to receive a personal letter from the pastor.

9. *Youth camps*.—We take a large number of young people to youth camp each year and give special emphasis to enlisting lost young people. Every year several young people are won to Christ at youth camps.

10. *Day camps*.—Our church has an eighteen-acre camp on a nearby lake. Each summer we employ four college students to work on our staff, and they direct seven weeks of day camps. Last year we enrolled almost five hundred children and saw many of them come to know Christ as their Savior.

11. *Men's rallies*.—Once a quarter we have a men's rally at our lake property or in our church fellowship hall. We

bring in an outstanding speaker and usually have between two and three hundred men present. We assign prospects for our men to bring, and we always have scores of prospects present.

12. *Ladies' luncheons*.—We likewise have ladies' luncheons once a quarter with outstanding speakers, and we use this as an opportunity to invite women prospects.

13. *Young-at-heart luncheons*.—Each month we have a young-at-heart luncheon for our retired members. Retired people who have recently moved into our community are invited to participate in this fellowship meal. One Sunday, after we have invited a number of newcomers to attend the young-at-heart luncheon, eight retired people joined our church in the Sunday morning service.

14. *Pastor's stay-for-church club*.—Each year in February we have a pastor's stay-for-church club. This is an emphasis among the first- through the sixth-grade children to stay for church and to take notes on the worship service in a book especially prepared for this purpose. The club is kicked-off each year with a breakfast and an evangelistic message. We then encourage children who have been thinking about this decision to talk with their Sunday School teachers, their parents, and the pastor.

15. *Vacation Bible School*.—Our annual Vacation Bible School is used to enlist and reach the lost.

16. *Business lunches*.—I have an expense account to be used for taking prospects to lunch. Several times each week I take prospects to lunch and in that informal and private time I have an opportunity to win many people to Christ and his church.

17. *Printed sermons*.—Periodically, and upon request,

the pastor's sermons are printed and distributed free of charge. These are oftentimes used as outreach tools as our people share them with friends and neighbors.

18. *Hospital brochures*.—Five attractive and informative brochures; one for each day of the week, with a message from the pastor are printed and used in daily hospital visitation.

19. *Newspaper articles*.—The pastor writes a weekly devotional for the newspaper. This devotional becomes our weekly ad and not only advertises our church but also conveys a Christian message. It's far more effective than a standard church ad.

20. *Outside services*.—Periodically we move our Sunday evening services out to the amphitheater of the city park or to the lakeside. This not only breaks the monotony of the program but attracts some people who otherwise would never come to our church. When I have lived in places where it was possible, I have had public baptisms in the river or lake.

21. *Visitation blitz*.—At times we have singled out mobile homes or apartment houses, mobilized a larger visitation force and visited from door to door until we had contacted every occupant.

22. *Home Bible studies*.—Our ladies have Tuesday morning Bible studies that attract prospects.

23. *Revival meetings*.—Then, of course we have a standard revival meeting occasionally. These have not proven very effective in our church. It might be because we reach people every week and so have a sort of perennial revival.

24. *Pastor's doctrinal book*.—I recently wrote a doctrinal statement for our church entitled "Where We Stand."

We printed it in booklet form and sold it to our people. On the day I offered it for sale, I preached a sermon summarizing the contents of the booklet. At the close of the service we sold almost a thousand copies. Many of our people bought several copies to share with friends and prospects. In the following two Sundays fifteen adults from other denominations joined our church by baptism. It continues to be a useful tool in outreach. Its chief strength is that it is neither a full-length book nor a scant leaflet. It's that happy medium in between. And it is personal. It states what "we" believe.

These of course do not exhaust all our outreach opportunities, but they do show that outreach is more of an attitude than an act. It is not a one-night-a-week program. It is a part of almost everything we do. We are committed to that. We may at times shift our tactics, but we never shift our goals. We are majoring on outreach. It takes that to make the church hum.

11

Minister to People

"Drawing power or pushing power."

The small-town preacher rushed down to the railroad station every day to watch the train go by. Members of his congregation thought his pastime juvenile, and asked him to give it up.

"No, gentlemen," he said firmly, "I preach your sermons, teach your church-school classes, bury your dead, marry you, run your charities, and chair every drive it pleases you to conduct. But I won't give up seeing that train. It's the only thing that passes through this town that I don't have to push."

We all grow weary from time to time of having continually to push the program of the church. We have to push offering. Push attendance. Push revival meetings. Push the budget. And we desperately long to see something move without our having to push it. What we are looking for is drawing power rather than pushing power.

The secret to drawing people is to meet their needs. If we have to continually push people, it is because we are trying to get them to do something they don't want to do. No man is lazy except in the pursuit of another man's goals. We live in a needy world. Everybody has a problem or

lives near one. As one of my seminary professors once said, "Young men, be kind to everybody, because everybody's having a hard time." If we meet their needs, people will be drawn. They won't have to be pushed.

Those churches that are really alive are the ones that are discovering and ministering to people's needs. So, look around you. Determine what the needs of your people are. Then give yourself to meeting those needs, and you shall discover that people are drawn to Christ and to his church.

A word of caution, however, is in order. Every situation is different. Do not simply try to copy somebody else's program. Rather, examine your own situation, determine what needs to be done and then do it. Just because somebody else is doing a thing and it works for them is no sign that you need to do the same thing.

Isaiah walked around naked in the streets for three years (Isa. 20:2-3). He was God's original streaking preacher. However, you had better pray a long time before you put on that kind of program. So, don't try to mimic or copy somebody else. God wants you to be you. God wants you to meet the needs of your community. Take a good look around. Talk to knowledgeable people. Discover those needs and meet them.

Through the years I have discovered several ministries that have been very effective in drawing people to Christ and his church. The following list is far from exhaustive. I offer it simply as a catalyst to stimulate your mind to thinking and planning your own program to draw people.

1. *Christ-exalting worship services.*—Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). This was a prophetic statement. Jesus had already

announced that he must be lifted up (John 3:14). Now he says that his cross will become a throne from which he would draw all men. It will have an irresistible and universal appeal. It is amazing, isn't it, that a Jewish carpenter, dying on a Roman cross during the first century, should still have such magnetism. But he does. And if you'll lift him up, people will be drawn to him.

2. *An exciting youth program.*—Parents today are in need of help with their young people. Wherever there is a church that will teach children and young people the word of God, wherever there is a church that will involve them in wholesome activities, there is a church that will be drawing people. Children and young people and parents naturally gravitate to where the action is. If you are interested in adults and their children, they will be interested in you. A strong youth program has great drawing power.

3. *Child-care ministry.*—A church that wants to draw people must give attention to children from the day they are born until the day when they leave home. Many people never take life seriously or realize their need of God until their first child is born. Then spiritual values take on new meaning. When that time comes, they will be drawn to the church that cares for little children. At Green Acres we give great emphasis to the children. We have a bright, attractive well-staffed nursery. We mail cards to people who have just had babies. We give them a book instructing them in child care. We have a new baby dedication service each year the Sunday following Mother's Day. At the close of our Sunday night service, I usually have a time with the children. I call them to the front and have them sit on the

floor. I recognize those who have had birthdays that week and talk with them a while. We then sing to them a little song I picked up in British Honduras several years ago. It goes like this:

Happy birthday to you,
 Happy birthday to you,
 Happy birthday, dear children,
 Happy birthday to you.

Happy birthday to you,
 Only one will not do,
 Take Christ as your Savior
 And then you'll have two.

After our song, I have a prayer and then we dismiss. The children love this part of the service. So do their parents. And if I forget it, they don't mind telling me so.

So we give emphasis to the children and many people are drawn to our church because of that.

4. *Recreation.*—Teenagers and young people are going to be busy doing something. If the church can provide a good recreation program, it will capture the lives of many people. I'm so firmly convinced that this is true that I have begun a recreation ministry in every church I have pastored. As a young man, I grew up across the alley from one church and one-half block from another. However, I never attended those churches for religious reasons.

Then one day I learned that one of the churches had a recreation program. They had a basketball team in the winter and a softball team in the spring. And if I would attend church, I could play on the teams. I did not know God at that time. Nor did I care anything about him. But I

did know sports, and I cared very much about them. I was willing to take church in order to participate in the recreation. Consequently, as I attended church I came to know about Christ, received him as my Savior and later dedicated my life to him.

All along the way, the church was careful to provide Christian coaches who took a personal interest in me as an individual, and greatly influenced my life. They talked to me about God, about girls, about life, as well as about ball, and consequently made a profound impression upon me. If it had not been for the church recreation program, I doubt if I would be a Christian or in the ministry today. There are scores of others like me. They already have an interest in recreation. And they'll take the spiritual to get the physical.

5. *Music*.—Few things have as much drawing, moving power as music. A good music program for children and young people and adults will draw people by the scores. Our goal is to have the finest, most spiritual, and uplifting music program available. That's how important I think it is.

6. *Single adults*.—Splitsville, USA, is the fastest growing community in the country. Divorce is almost as common as marriage. Behind most of these divorces are broken hearts, shattered dreams, and deep loneliness. Besides divorcees, of course, there are many more single adults.

Churches once virtually rejected divorcees as second-class citizens in the kingdom of God. More and more we are realizing that our attitude must be that which Jesus expressed when he said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Divorcees are still people. They need love, acceptance, and fellowship. If the church does not accept them, where can they go?

Our church provides an outstanding ministry to single adults. This includes Sunday School, training in the evening, and fellowship times on Sunday night called "After Glo." Divorcees by the scores are being drawn to our church simply because they find acceptance and fellowship there. I'll guarantee you one thing. You start a good single adults ministry in your church and you will find people being drawn, not pushed, into the place of worship.

7. *Senior adult fellowships.*—Our church sponsors a monthly luncheon called "The Young-at-Heart Club." One of our Sunday School classes serves a free fellowship meal to our senior adults. I do not know of a program anywhere better received and welcomed than this. Our senior adults rejoice in the opportunity of getting together to eat and have fellowship, and they are drawn to the church by this kind of ministry. Many have joined our church having first been attracted to it by this kind of fellowship.

Are you tired of pushing people to church? Then relax. Start ministering to their needs, and you'll see them being drawn to it. You'll never grow tired of that.

12

Shape Up the Plant.

***"The children of this world are wiser than
the children of light."***

The apostles applied the words of the psalmist to Jesus when they said, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). The word *eat* means to devour, to consume, to burn hot within me, to take full possession of me. As the apostles looked at the Lord, they saw him consumed and possessed with a zeal and an enthusiasm for the house of God. Such zeal and enthusiasm ought to mark every true follower of Christ.

Our zeal for the house of God ought to cause us to keep the buildings and grounds in top shape. I know that the church is not a building. But it meets in one. And the way we keep it speaks volumes concerning our love and devotion to the Lord.

One Saturday afternoon a pastor was in the study of the church when he heard someone walking through the building. He went out to see who it was. It was one of his faithful deacons. When he asked him if there was anything he could do for him, he replied, "I often come to the church and walk about it or sit and meditate. I love every brick of this building. I love the mortar between the joints. I love the plaster on the walls." I feel the same way. And it makes

me want to see to it that God's house is the most attractive place in town.

David expressed my sentiments when he acknowledged that he did not feel that it was right that he live in a house made of fine cedars while God's house was nothing but a tent. There is no justification for God's house being run-down and unkempt. If the church is going to hum, then we must give attention to its physical appearance as well as the spiritual exercise that goes on inside. To be sure, what happens inside a building is far more important than the building itself. A body can be just as dead in a bronze casket as in a pine box. But the plant presents an image and atmosphere that are still important. If the church is alive and well, the people will have a concern for its appearance.

So, buy a bucket of paint, hire an architect, and remodel, put in new carpet, landscape the grounds. Do whatever needs to be done to make the church beautiful and attractive. Take pride in the plant, and you'll find the people developing more pride in everything else also.

Parking is also a vital matter. They tell me, "If you build a better mousetrap, the world will beat a path to your door." I don't doubt it one bit. But if you will put a parking lot in front of it, the world will come faster and more often. In this respect the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. Look around and you will see that businessmen are careful to provide adequate parking for their customers. Surely we ought to be as wise in trying to get people into the place of worship as businessmen are to get them into their place of merchandise. I have studied most of the great churches in America. Without exception all of them do their very best to provide adequate parking for

their people.

We are faced with a very unique problem in our church. At the present time there is absolutely no more land available for parking. The land adjacent to our church is tied up in subdivision restrictions. So we have voted to buy several amusement part trams and run them back and forth to a shopping center parking lot two blocks away. We feel that this will help relieve our parking problems and at the same time will attract a great deal of interest on the part of our children. I believe that most of our preschoolers and children will make their parents park in the shopping center so they can ride the trams to church. It will combine the novel with the practical to make it easier for our people to come to worship.

The psalmist said, "How amiable [lovely] are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" (Ps. 84:1). That ought to be the feeling of everyone when they see the church of God. So, shape up your buildings and grounds and make them as beautiful and attractive as possible.

13

Advertise Well

"Let there be light."

I was visiting recently with one of my men who owns a local radio station. On his wall was this sign: "Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark; you know what you are doing, but nobody else does."

It certainly pays to advertise. As one anonymous poet has said:

A codfish lays a million eggs,
The faithful hen lays one;
But the codfish doesn't cackle
To tell us what she has done.

So we forget the codfish,
While the faithful hen we prize.
Which only goes to prove one thing:
It pays to advertise.

If a thing is worth doing, it is worth advertising. Advertising is to business what bait is to fishing. It can be just as valuable to the church. If you want to get people "hooked" on Jesus, advertising can help.

Some people think the church should not advertise. They believe that it makes the church too commercial. I

agree, if you are trying to offer discipleship at bargain basement prices. I agree, if you are trying to sell rather than to share. However, if your purpose is to be more effective in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ, then good advertising is wholly consistent with the Scriptures.

Paul said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Advertising fits into the "all means" category. The apostle sought to fit into the world in which he lived. He was willing to go to any length short of compromising the truth and his convictions in order to win people to faith in Christ. If advertising then can further the cause of Christ, it has a place in the church.

There are two guiding principles to church advertising.

Be professional. In advertising as in everything, "If you need an expert, hire one. Don't try to be one yourself." Poor advertising is worse than no advertising at all.

Diversify. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Some churches spend all of their advertising money on the newspaper. Others spend all of theirs on billboards. Still others spend all of their money on television. Branch out as much as possible, and you can reach more people.

We have discovered the following methods of advertising to be the most effective in our church:

Word of mouth.—By far the best advertisement that we have is the enthusiastic recommendation of one of our people to a neighbor, a friend, a family member, or a fellow employee. Studies indicate that more people visit a church as a result of the invitation of a friend or neighbor than any other reason. Therefore, I tell our people that they are full-time advertising agents for our church and for the cause of Christ. They take that responsibility seriously and do a

terrific job.

Radio.—We broadcast our Sunday morning services over a local radio station. I've done this in churches I've pastored for the past fifteen years. The effectiveness of a radio ministry is often hard to measure. However, you can rest assured that if the message is going out across the radio, there is someone out there listening and profiting by your ministry. So, don't be discouraged even though you don't see results immediately. I resigned my previous pastorate one Sunday morning to accept the call to Green Acres. The following Sunday morning a sixty-five-year-old schoolteacher came forward to profess her faith in Christ. She told me that for the past six years she had been listening to our services on the radio. She said when she learned that I had resigned, she felt that it was time for her to come and take her public stand for Christ. One of the last acts that I performed as pastor of that church was to baptize her. She had been listening on the radio for six years, and I had no knowledge of it until she made this profession of faith.

Television.—Increasingly, we need to use the media of television to advertise and to present the message of Christ. Since we have been unable to televise our Sunday morning services, we have from time to time used thirty-second and one-minute spots at prime time, and we have also produced television specials. Both of these have received numerous favorable comments.

Newspaper.—For the past twelve years I have written a weekly religious column for local newspapers. In smaller cities these articles were run free of charge. In Tyler they are run as paid advertisements, but they are worth the price. These columns deal with practical Christianity and

have a very wide appeal. I consider them our most effective paid advertising. The fact that I present a Christian message rather than just giving the time and place of our worship services attracts the attention of people of all faiths.

If people are impressed with the message, then they are more apt to be drawn to our church and our Lord.

Billboards.—We have with great effectiveness rented strategically-placed billboards around town to advertise our church and show our message. One shows a picture of the world with the caption, "God put it all together." Another asks the question, "What on earth are you doing for heaven's sake?"

Mail-outs.—We have also prepared professional-looking mail-outs for newcomers and visitors.

Visitation brochures.—We are in the process of developing a twelve-page booklet telling the complete story of Green Acres' ministries in pictures. As we visit, we find some people interested in one area of our church and others are interested in another area. This booklet will give the details of all the programs of our church. I've never seen a church that presented their complete program as we are doing in this booklet, and I'm convinced that it will have a great impact.

Remember that Jesus said that we are to let our light shine before men. He reminded us that it would be foolish to light a candle and then put it under a bushel basket. A light is supposed to shine. So are we. Advertising helps to make the most of it.

14

Cut Excess Meetings

"Don't wear them down trying to lift them up."

A mammoth motor van was parked on the shoulder of a Texas highway. The sun let loose the fury of her baking heat. There was no shade where the driver stood idly by the tractor from whence the front wheel had been removed. Obviously, he was waiting for help. A pastor with a cool car and a warm heart stopped and offered his assistance. The trucker thanked him, but said he had sent for help. He had burned out a wheel bearing, and another was on the way. Assured that he could be of no help, the pastor started to pull away. Then he saw a sign painted in large letters on the side of the van, "Standard Oil Company, Lubricant Division." As the pastor drove off, he exclaimed, "He burned out a bearing hauling grease!"

Church people can do the same thing. We can be so engaged in hauling our church cargo, making our rigid schedules, and delivering our religious payloads that we overlook the essential ingredient of worship which is so necessary for our progress. Then we too find ourselves burning our bearings while hauling grease.

There are so many meetings at the average church that a man could literally exhaust himself attending all of them.

Will Rogers once said, "The government taxes people to build roads and Baptists wear them out going to meetings." How right he was. When I think of the multitude of meetings that we have in our churches, I sometimes feel like the man who was being told about heaven. As his friend sought to describe the wonders and glories of the life to come, he said, "In heaven there shall be no partings." His friend replied, "It's not the partings that bother me; I hope there will be no meetings."

The danger of people burning out a bearing while hauling grease is not new. Jesus had to fight against that himself. The gospel writer said, "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6:31). He was actually so busy for God that he was about to exhaust himself.

One of the primary functions of the church is edification. The word *edify* is a construction term that means "to build up." But many churches have so many meetings and activities that they literally wear their people down while they are trying to build them up.

At Green Acres we have taken a long look at our church program and tried to trim out the fat. I have never seen any virtue in going to church every night. It doesn't make me a better Christian. In fact, it makes me worse. I need some time to worship, to be sure. I need some time to work, there is no doubt about that. But I also need time to rest and to be at home.

To avoid wearing your people out while you are trying to build them up, I would suggest that you do the following things to your church program.

Evaluate. Ask yourself the question, what would happen if we quit doing this particular activity? Would it make any real difference?

Basic to these questions are your priorities. And priorities are always getting out of kilter. Like the tires on your car, they need to be balanced occasionally. This was Martha's problem. Jesus visited her home in Bethany once. While her sister Mary sat at his feet and enjoyed rare moments of fellowship with him, Martha grew exasperated over fixing a meal. Jesus said she was "cumbered" over much serving. The word *cumbered* means to be distracted, to be drawn in first one direction and then another, to be pulled this way and that. It pictures a person uptight and perturbed. Martha was obviously so busy working for the Lord that she had no time to enjoy him. Her life was out of balance. Jesus reminded her that Mary had chosen that which was good, needful, and eternal.

We all fall victims to the Martha mania. We get so involved in the many things that we neglect the one thing—our relationship and fellowship with the Lord. We become like the proverbial river—a mile wide and an inch deep. We're spread out but there's no depth to our lives. What's the use of putting more irons in the fire if the fire is going out? The fires of fellowship and devotion to Christ must not be neglected—not even for a meeting. Our priorities should be worshiping the Lord, walking with the Lord, and witnessing for the Lord. If the activity does not enrich one of these, it ought to be suspect.

Eliminate. If the activities or meetings serve no useful purpose, then discard them. There is no value in continuing a meeting or an activity simply because you have always

done it. Tradition is no justification for continuation. Nor is there any reason for you to continue to do something just to please somebody else. The question is one of value. You cannot possibly do everything, so you must be selective. That means that you weigh every meeting, every activity, every program and decide for yourself if it has value for you and for your church. This kind of evaluation and elimination ought to take place every year.

Consolidate. At Green Acres we now have only two nights of regular activities each week—Sunday night and Wednesday night. As much as possible we consolidate all of our meetings to those two nights and schedule no other regular activities throughout the week. On Sunday night we have our regular worship services, plus deacons' meetings once a month, and occasionally special committee meetings. Wednesday night is the real work night at our church. Our Wednesday night schedule goes like this:

- 5:00 to 6:30 — Fellowship supper
- 5:40 to 6:40 — Sunday School planning meetings
 - Outreach visitation for choir members and others
 - Graded choirs
- 6:45 to 7:30 — Prayer service for adults
 - Prayer service for young people
 - Mission organizations for children
- 7:30 to 9:00 — Sanctuary choir rehearsal
 - Outreach visitation
 - Committee meetings

Beyond this there are only occasionally special meetings at night and some few meetings during the day.

Dedicate. Just to eliminate useless meetings or to consolidate other activities does not make us more dedicated to the Lord. Reducing the number of meetings that exhaust us or sour us or ruin our homelife is not sufficient. We must then give ourselves to that which is the highest and best. The time we have conserved from useless meetings is then to be used for the high and noble purpose of serving our Lord more effectively.

Remember—we are here to do God's will. Time is lent to us to be laid out in God's service, and we cannot be too diligent in it. Don't waste your own time or the time of others in useless meetings. Build people up. Don't wear them down. That's the mark of a humming church.

15

Develop Good Stewards

"It's more blessed to give than to receive."

A giving church is a humming church, and a humming church is a giving church. The two are inseparable.

Four years ago I sat in my first budget planning meeting as the pastor of Green Acres. I was fresh on the field and therefore knew very little of what could be, or needed to be, done. I learned that day that in previous months, while without a pastor, they had had trouble meeting their bills. An air of pessimism prevailed in the meeting. In fact, one of the members of the committee said, "I have heard for years that there is money in our church. But I have never seen it." I knew then that the committee was not going to do anything spectacular. So, I just sat back and listened. The end result was a budget of \$315,000.

As I thought and prayed about the matter, I came to the conclusion that this was not challenging enough for our church. So I went to them with this proposal. Let's adopt the \$315,000 as our budget. But let's attempt to pledge \$350,000. All that we pledge above our regular budget will be used for missions, evangelism, and outreach. Their response was less than enthusiastic. But after all, they had nothing to lose. The first \$315,000 went to the budget. If

we got anything more than that, they were willing to use it for missions, outreach, and evangelism. If . . .

We then with all of our hearts went to work to pledge our budget. We used the traditional letters, posters, devotions, Sunday School lessons, testimonies, sermons, and an all-church canvass. When we were finished, our people had pledged in excess of \$350,000. And when the budget year was over, they had given in excess of \$360,000. The success of that first stewardship emphasis could never be measured in dollars and cents alone. There were spiritual intangibles that cannot be measured by any statistics. From that day forward our church started to hum with enthusiasm, optimism, and excitement. Eyes were opened. Lives were changed. Dedication was deepened. And there was a new interest in all of our church life.

From that first experience until now, we have gone onward and upward each year with new stewardship records.

Our second great experience came two years ago when we were preparing to build our Family Life Center. I was convinced we could raise at least half of the needed funds in three-year pledges. Most of our deacons were skeptical. Some of our older men felt that we could raise \$250,000 at best. There were times when their pessimism almost destroyed my faith. Nonetheless I kept believing and telling the people that I believed we could do it.

When our "Together We Build" campaign was over, we had pledged in excess of the \$600,000, and pledges are still coming in.

Without a doubt our stewardship growth has greatly contributed to the overall success of our church.

What is the secret? What did we do? Briefly we followed the example of Paul as set out in 2 Corinthians 8—9. Those chapters set out the most exhaustive teaching of Christian giving in the Bible. In them there are some clear guidelines for an effective stewardship program.

Base it on the clear teachings of the Scriptures. Paul's appeal was the appeal of God's word. These chapters are saturated with what God had done for them and what their response to him ought to be. Not only do Paul's writings carry the weight and authority of the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16) but several times in the two chapters he quotes Old Testament Scripture to substantiate a point (2 Cor. 8:15; 9:9—10).

Our appeal must always be to the Scriptures. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). We are commanded to give as God has prospered us (1 Cor. 16:1—2).

It is true that "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6).

So tell it like it is. Don't pull any punches. Don't apologize. Tell them what God says. And many of them will do it.

Make good use of testimonies. Paul's appeal began with the example of the Macedonian churches (2 Cor. 8:1—8). It was a positive testimony of Christian stewardship. He used their example to inspire the Corinthians. Use testimonies in your stewardship emphasis also. After all, if a man tells of the struggle he had in stewardship growth and tells how he overcame the obstacles and tells what blessings he has received, others will be moved and inspired.

What great testimonies I have heard from our people.

They are a thrill to me continually.

After our first great stewardship victory, one of our deacons said to me, "Pastor, I didn't grow up in a church where stewardship was emphasized, so I never tithed until just a few years ago. Of course, my tithe is not much now since I am just tithing off my Social Security. But I want you to know that it has brought a great joy to my life, and I get a whole lot more out of church now that I have started tithing."

One day while driving home from a hunting trip, I was talking with one of my men about our recently completed "Together We Build" campaign. He said, "I can tell you one thing; I'll never tithe again!" I almost had a cardiac arrest. I asked what he meant. He said, "Before this building fund drive, I was tithing, but could hardly make ends meet. When we were asked to give above our tithe to the new building, I saw no way we could do it. I decided to do it by faith, however, and since that time things have gone so well for me that I'll never go back to giving just a tithe again. I intend to give a tithe-plus from now on."

Assure the people of good management and wise use of the funds they give. The apostle Paul was not only a good preacher, he was also an astute businessman. He gave the Corinthians every assurance that the funds would be properly managed and supervised (2 Cor. 8:16-24). He told them the names and reputations of those who would do the collecting and dispersing. He left no room for anyone to criticize him.

Make it clear that your purpose is not just to raise money but to grow people spiritually.

One time I heard of a farmer whose neighbor came to

him and said, "Jim, you don't need to work those boys so hard to raise corn," and Jim replied, "Tom, I'm not raising corn; I'm raising boys."

That's what God is doing, and that's one of the primary objects of Christian stewardship (2 Cor. 8:6). God can fairly well get along without any man's gift. But that man can never grow in grace without giving. Make sure he knows that.

Trust God for the results. We must encourage people to give according to God's actual resources, not according to their apparent resources. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1). "The cattle on a thousand hills" [are his] (Ps. 50:10). "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8).

More and more I believe in faith financing. Plan an adequate budget. Inform the people of the need. Assure them of wise management. Clearly set out God's truth. Then trust them and God to see that the need is met.

Exercise faith in God and in your people. Faith is not passive. It is an active trust that your people and God can be counted on to do what needs to be done. After all, faith can move mountains. Surely, it can supply the financial needs of one little church.

These are the basics of good stewardship promotion and growth. Whatever else you do or leave undone, don't neglect them. Stewardship is important in your church. It is a key to growth and development. Don't minimize it. Simply put it on the highest level possible, and it will not only grow a church but it will also grow strong Christians.